DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 183 040 HE 012 186

AUTHOR Dill, David D.
TITLE The Structure of the Academic Profession: Toward a Definition of Ethical Issues.
PUB DATE 18 Apr 79
NOTE 17p.; Paper prepared for a session on "Ethics in the Academic Profession," American Association for Higher Education (Washington, DC, April 18, 1979)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Accountability; *College Faculty; Consultants; *Ethical Values; *Faculty College Relationship; Higher Education; Interprofessional Relationship; Peer Relationship; *Professional Services; Researchers; *Role Conflict; Student Teacher Relationship; *Teacher Role
IDENTIFIERS Conflict of Interest; *Teaching (Occupation)

ABSTRACT

An attempt is made to identify potential sources of value conflicts or dilemmas faced by faculty members. Limitations inherent in our understanding of the academic profession are suggested, and the role of the individual faculty member is analyzed. A typology of the academic profession developed by Donald Light is considered. Light concludes that by definition there is no academic profession as such, but rather characteristics of a profession that center on each discipline. It is suggested that in the United States academics have never been a free profession because they cannot practice it unless first hired by a university. There is a limited community of interest among the academic profession and the faculty subset. Conflicts may exist between the activities of teaching, research, and service. The rapidly developing federal influence in the activity of research, and the potentials for legal accountability for those engaged in the research process, have led to a major conflict between the interests of science and those of the broader society. Service is a professional activity that not all faculty members provide. The primary issue in regard to service is the relationship between the faculty member and the client. The teaching activity of academics is influenced by more members of the role set than either research or service. These influences include: the norms of the discipline and field; the policies established; and the expectations of students. Value conflicts are intrinsic to the professoriate by virtue of the multiple clients served. The source of these conflicts may also stem from competing and changing influences from the professional role set, which alter the relationships between the faculty member and his various clients. (SW)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

Session 43

Press Office

Michael Cleveland

THE STRUCTURE OF THE ACADEMIC PROFESSION:

TOWARD A DEFINITION OF ETHICAL ISSUES

David D. Dill

School of Education

University of North Carolina

at Chapel Hill

ED183040

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

David P. Dill

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

DRAFT

Not to be reproduced or cited

without permission

A paper prepared for a session on "Ethics in the Academic Profession," American Association for Higher Education, Washington, D.C., April 18, 1979.

HE 012 186

My colleague Larry Churchill and I initiated a colloquy in the Chapel Hill area the intent of which was to identify the value conflicts and ethical issues germane to the academic profession. Our orientation was consistent with that employed in law, business, and medicine, where the focus is on the ethical dilemmas intrinsic to a professional role, or what Bill May has usefully termed "quandary ethics." That is, what are the bases of choice to be employed by academic professionals faced with conflicting values?

Consistent with efforts in other professional fields, the first issue of interest is--what values are in conflict in the academic profession, and how do we identify them? There appear to be two traditional techniques for increasing ethical sensitivity among professional groups. The first is to engage the professionals of interest in collegial discussion of problems and tensions in the field, and to gradually identify pressing value issues, to classify and to organize them. I term this inductive process, "ethics from below." In fact this was our procedure in the colloquy at Chapel Hill. We brought together a small group of interested faculty members representing most of the disciplines and professional schools. Through a process of joint discussion we tried to identify contemporary value issues in the academic profession and possibly extrude modes of right conduct.

A second technique is to focus not on the practical problems of professionals, but on classical value conceptions themselves and to seek via analysis an understanding of these conceptions through the tools of philosophy and/or intellectual history. The practical application of this approach is then to help professions sort through the quandaries they face using these great ideas as templates. I term this deductive process, "ethics from above." The closest approximation to this technique in the academic profession might be those philosophers who debate the concept "objectivity," particularly as it relates to scientific method, or those who address the distinction between

teaching and indoctrination.

Most of the literature that I have read addressing ethical or value issues in the academic profession falls into one of these two traditions. However, I would like to suggest a third perspective. In our discussions at Chapel Hill we consistently stumbled over the conception, "the academic profession." That is, is there a definable community of professionals we term academics? Do they share a common role, and do they encounter comparable value and ethical dilemmas? Or are we in fact separable discipline-based professionals, joined only in Clark Kerr's phrase by an interrelated system of university parking lots? I believe that this issue is not superficial, but substantive for any inquiry into values in the academic profession. I would suggest that our means of understanding the academic profession are themselves value-based, and thereby constrain insights into the sources of ethical dilemmas faced by individual faculty members. In this paper, therefore, I will try to suggest the limitations inherent in our understanding of the academic profession. I will then turn to an analysis of the role of the individual faculty member for insight into the sources of value conflicts intrinsic to the profession.

last pg

The Academic Profession

What is the academic profession, or better yet, who are its members? Donald Light, a sociologist at Princeton, has presented a useful typology for discussing this question.[1]

FIGURE I ABOUT HERE

Light offers several definitions as part of his typology.

1. Faculty: Faculty are people with academic appointments at institutions of higher education.

2. Profession: A profession has the following characteristics:
    a. It has exclusive powers to recruit and train new members as it sees fit.
    b. It has exclusive powers to judge who is qualified.
    c. It is responsible for regulating the quality of professional work.
    d. It has high social prestige.
    e. It is grounded in an esoteric and complex body of knowledge.
3. A Scholarly Profession: This is an occupation with the attributes of a profession whose core activity is the advancement of knowledge (Note that the vast majority of these individuals do not have academic appointments, but rather are scholars in other settings, e.g., Library of Congress, scientists in industry, etc.).
4. An Academic Profession is that subset of a scholarly profession with academic appointments at institutions of higher education. As a body, it exercises the first two powers of a profession and to a large degree regulates the quality of professional work.

This is a theoretical typology and it has been constructed with an eye toward its consistency with definitions of other professional groups. While this typology can be subjected to criticism, that is not my purpose here. What is of interest is that this typology does seem to represent the way many academics think about themselves and their profession. For example, Light concludes that by definition there is no academic profession as such, but rather the five characteristics of a profession center on each discipline, and consequently we have the "academic professions," one for each disciplinary field. Second, Light assumes that insight into the nature of the

academic profession is best obtained by studying the entire subset labeled the scholarly profession, i.e., those who conduct research and advance knowledge, but do not necessarily have academic appointments. By way of example, Light notes the significant number of academic professionals who are research scholars--who do no teaching at all--and thereby have roles very similar to the scholarly profession, but wholly different from the faculty subset. Third, Light suggests that undergraduate teaching and administrative duties are by definition not core activities for the academic professional, but institutional activities or expectations. They are therefore marginal to the professional activity and development of academics. It is worth noting that all three of these perceptions cropped up again and again in our Chapel Hill colloquy. They are best summarized by the phrase, "I am not a professional teacher, but a professional philosopher (or, classicist, sociologist, chemist, etc. -- choose the appropriate field)." Whatever else we may think of Light's typology, therefore, I would contend that it successfully captures existing norms and perceptions about the nature of the academic profession.

What are the implications of these norms concerning the academic profession for an inquiry into academic ethics? In my view these norms limit our sense of potential value conflicts in three ways: 1) there is an unstated assumption that the academic profession is a "free profession" and is therefore untrammeled by institutional obligations; 2) there is an assumption that the core values of the scholarly profession are the appropriate values for the faculty subset, and 3) there is an assumption that the community of interest among all faculty (i.e., faculty as well as members of the academic profession) is both limited, and of limited importance. I will discuss each of these in turn.

The concept "free profession" has usually been understood in terms of

the practice of lawyers and doctors; that is individuals who practice their profession independently and support themselves by fees from clients. The concept of a free profession is actually of declining utility; increasing numbers of professionals today--even street walkers-- conduct their professional activity as part of some larger organizational entity. However, by virtue of the tradition of the free profession, professional education in law and medicine could reasonably, and responsibly, ignore training relevant to organizational responsibilities such as the management of a joint practice or trial work. In contrast, academics in the United States have never been a free profession; a point made obvious by the fact that they cannot practice their profession unless first hired by a college or university. The concept of an academic profession as defined by Light has always existed in organizational settings, and historically the autonomy and independence of the research professor evolved out of an organizational setting in which teaching was the only professional activity. What is particularly ironic about this situation is that some schools of medicine and law are beginning to incorporate training relevant to organizational responsibilities into their professional education programs. In contrast, few if any doctoral programs include or require professional training in teaching even though this responsibility is a guaranteed obligation of those in the faculty subset.[2] In summary, the unstated assumption that the academic profession is a free profession leads to a situation in which the potential value conflict between institutional obligations and professional values is by definition not an issue of professional responsibility.

The academic profession as defined by Light is that group of faculty members directly involved in recruiting, training and judging those qualified to join the profession. These faculty members are the graduate faculties of our leading universities. However, only a small proportion of the individuals

trained in the core values of the profession--scholarship and the advancement of knowledge--actually join the profession. The majority assume positions as faculty members in largely undergraduate institutions where the values they have developed may be in conflict, not only with institutional expectations, but also with the activities of their role. The proposed advanced teaching degree--the Doctor of Arts--widely discussed several years ago, was a proposed solution to this problem. The almost total disappearance of this option under the pressures of the congested academic market suggests only that the potential conflict between the inculcated values of the academic profession and the required activities of faculty members still lies below the surface.

Finally, the community of interest among the academic profession and the faculty subset is by definition limited. Therefore, attempts to define value issues through collegial discussion would appear to be of little benefit. However, a recent national survey of academic governance reveals that the average faculty member in all types of institutions reported spending some time in the traditional areas of teaching, research, and service.[3] In other words, all faculty members report doing similar activities. While the amount of time spent in each area varied significantly by type of institution, and while the nature of the activity may itself vary (e.g., research at Harvard is apt to be a very different activity than research at Cuyahoga Community College), the value conflicts and dilemmas faced by individuals in these roles may in fact be very similar. This is particularly true when the dilemmas encountered relate to conflicts between the activities of teaching, research and service. For example, the multiple activities of the academic role consistently force faculty members to make choices between organizational expectations regarding teaching and professional values regarding research, and this is true in all institutions of higher education.

Our prevailing norms about the academic profession thereby seem to inhibit an analysis of the value conflicts continually faced by faculty members. An alternative means of considering the question which may be particularly fruitful in clarifying the quandaries encountered by all faculty members, is thus to look not at the academic profession, but at the representative activities of the faculty role and the groups which influence these activities.

The Faculty Role

If we consider a faculty member's function as a role--a recurring series of activities--we can then focus on the various constituencies which influence that role. Robert Merton has provided the useful concept of a "role set."[4] The activities which define a given role are maintained through the expectations of others relevant to the performance of the role. These relevant others are members of the role set, and their expectations are communicated through attempts at influence. Figure II outlines the activities of the faculty role--teaching, research, and service--and suggests the major constituencies composing the role set: a) supporters of research; b) institutional colleagues; c) members of one's academic field; d) clients of service; e) institutional administration; and f) students. In order to have a better understanding of conflicting values encountered by faculty members, we need to look at the primary activities of the role and of the ways they have been traditionally influenced by the constituencies in the role set.

FIGURE II ABOUT HERE

---

1. Research

The activity of research implies extending the domain of reliable knowledge in a specific discipline or field. The professional norms guiding

the process of inquiry include: a) the primacy given to research over other activities for achieving status as a faculty member; b) the norms influencing the selections of research problems in a field, and c) the norms influencing research design, protocols, and safeguards utilized in conducting research, e.g., research on human subjects. The prime influence over professional behavior in research activity has been the members of the academic discipline or field. They are the true clients of this activity in that they use the research results in their own research and teaching. Thus the issues of import to study, as well as the acceptable methods of research, are influenced most directly by the expectations of colleagues in one's field. These expectations heavily influence the behavior of researchers. In two heavily publicized recent incidents, the research of a medical scientist studying cancer, and the well-established research of a psychologist investigating I.Q., their ethical conduct as researchers was brought into question by fellow professionals who suggested their research was fraudulent.

The Federal government, the foundations and other supporters of research--particularly basic research--have served as patrons of research. The faculty member remains accountable to these agencies for funds received in much the same way that a physician is responsible for Medicare payments. Since these agencies do not directly benefit from nor consume the research, they have in the past not attempted to influence the professional norms of research.

There has been a substantial change in the influence of the patrons of research during the 1970's and they are now assuming the influence of clients or consumers. First, basic research funds are more rare, applied or targeted research funds more typical. The influence of these patrons on the topics or problems to be studied in many fields is consequently growing. Second, the Federal government has sought to influence directly both

the methods of research and the topics of research in certain fields, out of a concern for the social consequences of inquiry. For example, Federal funding for research involving human subjects is now contingent upon campus-based review mechanisms which determine whether the research meets appropriate professional standards. If this case cannot be made, funding may not be granted. Third, under prodding from the scientific community itself Federal legislation has been proposed regulating research into recombinant DNA and stipulating penalties for those who violate the guidelines.

Thus, the rapidly developing Federal influence in the activity of research, and the potentials for legal accountability for those engaged in the research process, have led to a major conflict between the interests of science and those of the broader society. This in turn has led to a continuing reexamination of the norms governing research among various disciplinary associations.

2. Service

Service implies the provision of professional expertise to a particular client. In this capacity faculty members come closest to the traditional professions. But it is a professional activity that not all faculty members provide, limited primarily to the sciences, social sciences, and professional schools: doctors, lawyers, and psychologists employed as faculty members, for example, continue to maintain private practices; professors of business and education consult with organizations; and biologists, sociologists, and others carry out applied research on a contractual basis. The primary issue in regard to service is the relationship between the faculty member and the client. In these activities a faculty member can clearly be accountable. For example, if a geology professor contracts with an oil company to carry out a geologic survey, he is legally liable for fulfilling the terms of the contract. However, the accountability or influence of these clients is

specific and limited given the overall role of the faculty member. There are also other issues. Has the faculty member insured professional objectivity, and should he provide services to whomever requests them - should, for example, the political psychologist provide his services equally to a democratic republic and a police state?

Primary influence on this area of professional behavior has again been wielded by the members of one's discipline or field. A recent example of this influence was the report by Dianne Ravitch of the vote for dismissal of a political science professor by his colleagues for alleged covert involvement with the CIA.[5] The members of the department taking this action indicated the behavior violated policy statements of the American Association of University Professors, the American Political Science Association, and the American Anthropological Association, all of which oppose participation by academics in covert intelligence activities.

The clarity of these norms and their enforcement are erratic. Some academic institutions might take action against a faculty member for involvement with the CIA, others would not. Several years ago I participated in the hearings held for a full-time faculty member in a school of engineering who had testified under oath as to his involvement in a political scandal. He had served as a "bagman," carrying payoff money from contractors to politicians. At the time the faculty member was president of his own engineering consulting firm. The faculty committee conducting the hearing could find no codes of the academic profession which were broken. However, because the school of engineering also subscribed to the code of ethics of the engineering profession which prohibited the acceptance of bribes, the dean of the school and the faculty had grounds for determining the behavior professionally irresponsible. The faculty member was suspended from his duties. An interesting sidelight of this case was the position of the University's legal counsel.

He wondered how a faculty member could conduct all the activities this individual recorded on one day a week consulting time. Serious consideration was given, not only to disciplinary action on the basis of ethical conduct, but also to a suit to recover part of the faculty member's salary on the basis of violation of contract. This entire incident illustrates both the potential for institutional accountability in the activities of service as well as the diffuseness of professional standards governing behavior in this area.

3. Teaching

The teaching activity of academics is influenced by more members of the role set than either research or service. These influences include: the norms of the discipline and field; the policies established jointly by institutional faculty members and the administration; and the expectations of students. While the disciplines or fields have traditionally not stipulated codes or methods of teaching, certain fields appear to have norms influencing the choice of instructional method: a) case analysis in law and business; b) experiential instruction in the health sciences; and c) lectures and seminars in the humanities. The institutional expectations affect the number of student contact hours an instructor has--the teaching load--and certain course policies such as grading. Students' influence has, in the past, been slight, limited primarily to appealing to the conscience of the faculty member. A primary example is student-initiated evaluation of teaching.

This brief review of the faculty role helps to illustrate that value conflicts are intrinsic to the professoriate by virtue of the multiple clients served. This analysis also suggests that the source of these conflicts stems from competing and changing influences from the professional role set, which alter the relationships between the faculty member

and his various clients. These influences also affect the weight which the faculty member places on his various activities. For example, a doctoral recipient in English Literature from Duke University may take a position in a community college. Many of the conflicts and pressures encountered by this individual could be interpreted as attempts by the role set to influence the weights and values the new faculty member assigns to his activities.

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper has been to attempt to identify potential sources of value conflicts or dilemmas faced by faculty members. Because of the limitations imposed by prevailing norms on what constitutes the academic profession, ethical dilemmas faced by individual faculty members tend to be ignored in professional discussions. One practical consequence of this near sightedness is that the ethical codes of conduct developed by many disciplinary associations will not address ethical conflicts encountered in teaching and service. In contrast, it was suggested that by looking at the activities of faculty members as a common role with a comparable though shifting role set we may gain insight into the dynamics of value conflict in the academic profession. In particular, we can begin to identify the sources of existing value strain, and the points of tension which are apt to yield the ethical dilemmas of the future.

Notes

1. Donald Light, "Introduction: The Structure of the Academic Professions," Sociology of Education, Winter, 1974, pp. 2-28.

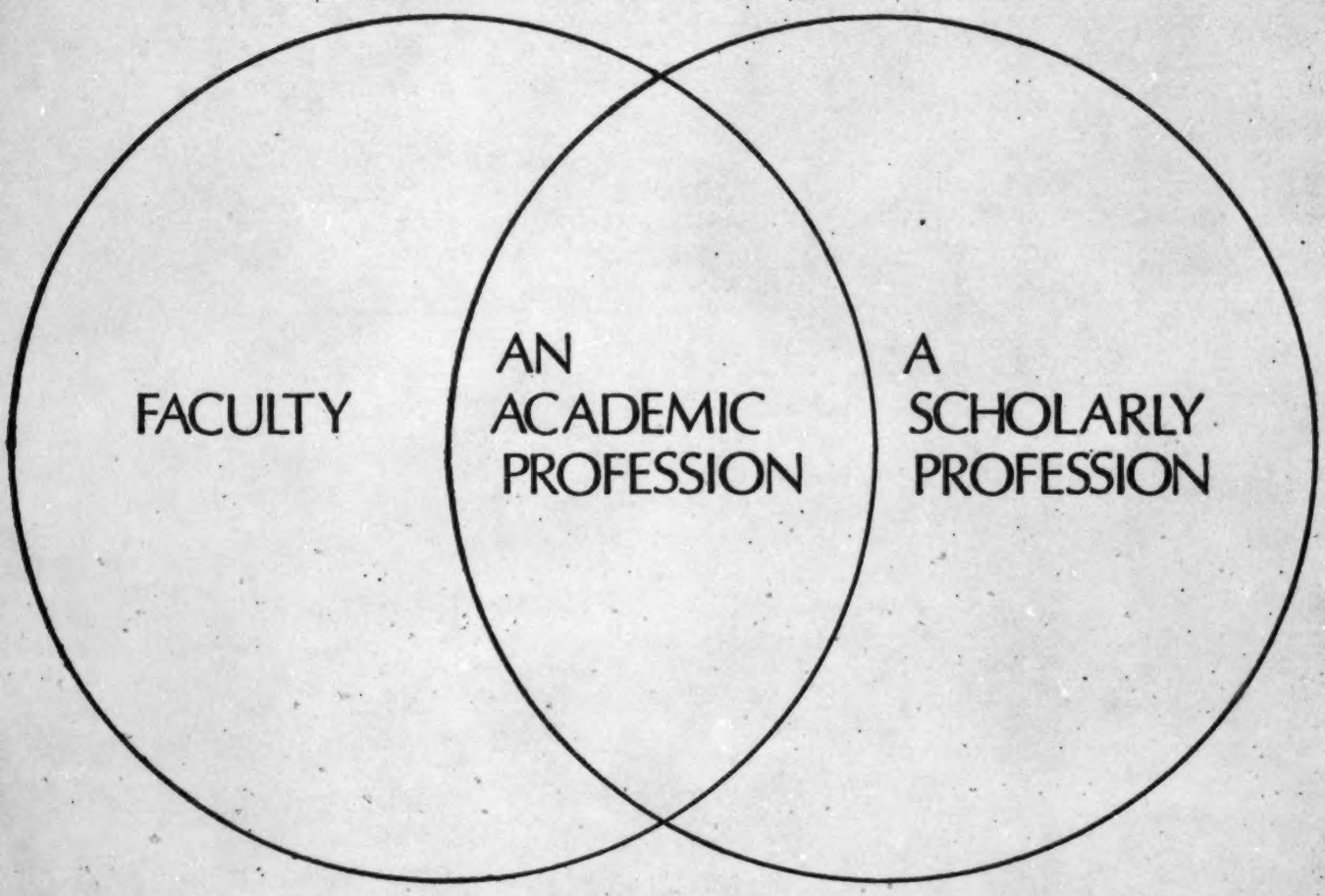
2. Some may note that many doctoral students receive teaching assistantships which constitute an apprenticeship in teaching. In response I would submit that the best analogy to a teaching assistant that I can think of is the young child who mows my neighbor's lawn on Saturdays; my neighbor cares not a whit about the quality of the job, but is thankful he can get someone else to do it.

3. J. Victor Baldridge, David V. Curtis, George Ecker, and Gary L. Riley, Policy Making and Effective Leadership (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1978).

4. Robert K. Merton, Social Theory and Social Structure (New York: Free Press, 1957).

5. Diane Ravitch, "Brouhaka in Brooklyn," The New Republic, March, 1977, pp. 18-21.

The Academic Profession



Role of Academic Professional